

Blossoms Forever

A Newsletter for Blooming Prairie School District Alumni & Friends • November 2007



Artist's Depiction of Remodeled BPHS Entrance

Welcome Alumni and Friends. What a great organization to remember your ties to the Blooming Prairie Schools. I really appreciate all the work that has been done by a few people to get this organized. A special thanks to Doug and Judy Myers for their constant effort in making Blooming Prairie a better place.

I would like to congratulate all former Blossoms and Blossom wannabes. The "Awesome Blossoms" do have great traditions and we need to continue to recognize them. During my travels throughout the state I hear comments about the respect our community and our schools have. The first thing that is usually said is "you're from the home of the Blossoms", and then they talk about the nice things they hear about our community. I also hear from many graduates who recognize the quality education that they received while being a Blossom. Many alumni realize the importance of these skills that were taught and how these skills have helped them attain the success they have come to know. It does take a community to raise a child and I firmly believe that Blooming Prairie has done this and will continue to do this quite well.

I would also like to share the exciting things that are happening to our building. The design phase of the renovation is now completed and we are beginning the work on the construction documents. We are very excited to see the major improvements that will be made to our district. Ground breaking will take place in the spring and the first phase of renovation will be completed by the start of the 2008-2009 school year. The final renovations will take place the next summer. Many quality improvements will occur but some of the major ones include a new media center, new locker rooms, new computer labs, new science and FACS labs, new administration and entrance area and a new track. These renovations will be very visible and we are looking forward to showing them off once they are completed. Please plan a trip to BP town and stop in and see the updated school in the near future.

Have a great Holiday Season and Go Blossoms.

Barry W. Olson, Superintendent

Education Foundation Notes



The Blooming Prairie Education Foundation will be starting the 8th year of existence. A couple of the most frequently asked questions that we hear are: "What is the Education Foundation anyway?" and "What do they do with all of the money they raise?" First of all, the education foundation

was formed in 1999. A group of concerned parents, business people, and citizens of School District #756 had the foresight to recognize the fact that there will come a time that the District will not be able to provide a lot of the "extras" that we have been providing our students for many years. **The Mission statement of the foundation is as follows: To contribute to the development of innovative programs, fund special equipment needs and promote projects and programs to enhance the learning opportunities for students of Independent School District #756.** The board consists of 20 members, including 2 teachers and 2 students. The balance of the members are community people who happen to love Blooming Prairie, the town, the school and of course "our kids". We, as a community, are very grateful for all of those people giving their time and efforts for the benefit of the future of Blooming Prairie. As for where do we spend the money? We receive requests twice a year from the teachers and advisors to help provide equipment, field trips, spelling bees, lyceums, weekly readers, provide scholarships to graduates and many other programs that would not be possible if funding had to come from the District. As you know the State funding has been cut dramatically. Last year we were able to fund programs for

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BLOOMING PRAIRIE SCHOOL DISTRICT ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

The Blooming Prairie School District Alumni and Friends Group is being formed for the purpose of reliving the past and providing support and encouragement to current and future Blossoms. Alumni and Friends are asked to officially join the group by *filling out the membership form below and sending a check for \$15.00 made out to Blooming Prairie School District Alumni and Friends to:

Blooming Prairie Education Foundation
Box 521
Blooming Prairie, Minnesota 55917
Attention: Tamzen Johnson, Treasurer

Members will receive a biannual newsletter with updates on Upcoming Class reunions, renovation news from BPHS, Alumni and Friends profiles, new and retiring staff members, current news of Blooming Prairie School District students, BPHS sports –current and past, Blooming Prairie history, and the Blooming Prairie Public Education Foundation.

Your yearly membership fee of \$15.00 will include two issues, November and May, of interesting information as stated above. This is the first issue and it has been mailed to all Blossom Alumni and Friends for which we had mailing addresses. Share it with a classmate, colleague or friend. It's great to be a Blossom so we know everyone will want to join us.

*If you have already filled out a membership card, just send the check.

BLOOMING PRAIRIE SCHOOL DISTRICT ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

NAME _____ MAIDEN NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
E-MAIL _____
TELEPHONE: _____ CELL PHONE: _____

I graduated in _____ or am current or former staff member _____
or am Blossom Friend _____

_____ I am willing to be directly involved in forming a Blossom Alumni and Friends group.

_____ I do not wish to be directly involved in forming a Blossom Alumni and Friends group, but I would like to be in contact with fellow alumni and friends and would like to receive current Blooming Prairie School District News.

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approximately \$50,000. Also we were able to be helpful in starting the All Day/ Every Day Kindergarten and programming for the tutoring program and help fund the Blooming Prairie Boys and Girls Club. We have approximately 120 students who attend programs there.

We have begun an endowment fund, which has started from the generosity of the alumni, community, and memorials. We thank everyone for that.

We have two fundraisers each year. On January 26, 2008 we will be having our annual banquet at the BP Servicemen's Club. On March 29, 2008 we will be having our 5th Live and Silent Auction at the Pizza Cellar/Cue Company. This has been deemed as the "Best Party In Blooming Prairie" for 4 years now and we think we will make it 5. Over the past 4 years, we have been able to raise nearly \$150,000. This is a lot of fun for alumni to come see old friends of the past and make new ones. This event will surely make you understand why we all love Blooming Prairie so much. Plan now to attend.

I want to thank you all for your support of the Education in Blooming Prairie and ask for your continued support.

Sue Zwiener, Class of 1971

President, BP Education Foundation

B.P. Trivia

Prior to 1873, Blooming Prairie was known as Oak Glen.

The graduating class of 1903 listed eight graduates. Some last names of the group included Brainerd, Guthrie, Peterson and Treat.

Lillian Belle Gleason was from Blooming Prairie and was also a Blooming Prairie School District teacher in the early years. She later became the wife of George Hormel.

The roster of 1925 graduates included names of Benson, Bray, Coughlin, Hillson, Ingvalson, Morton, Rasmussen, Rye, Trom, and Wold.

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**Blooming Prairie School District
Alumni & Friends
Distinguished Service Award**

"Blossoms Forever" has come about somewhat spontaneously as Alumni and Friends have recently come together to celebrate our mutual past. It seems very right to have "Blossoms Forever" as the banner on this and every newsletter to come. The everlasting distinction of being a Blossom is ours and only ours. How special it is to forever be a Blossom.

In gratitude to the citizens of Blooming Prairie and also to the many teachers, administrators, and other school district staff members who taught us and counseled us, our Alumni and Friends group has decided to each year honor a number of Alumni with "Distinctive Service Awards". It is our belief that by honoring BPHS graduates that we also honor the many Blooming Prairie people that had a part in each honoree's success.

Consequently, on Saturday, January 26, The Blooming Prairie School District Alumni and Friends group will hold an awards banquet to recognize distinctive Blossom Alumni. The event will be a part of the annual Blooming Prairie Education Foundation Banquet.

Each reader is asked to submit nominations. Use the following guidelines in submitting names:

Candidates must have graduated from Blooming Prairie Public Schools at least ten years prior to induction.

Candidates must have made a positive contribution to the benefit of mankind.

Candidates must have achieved outstanding success in one or more of the following areas: A profession, business, the arts, humanitarian efforts, or community service.

Please send the name, current address, telephone number, and e-mail address of the nominee to Blooming Prairie Alumni and Friends, Box 521, Blooming Prairie, Minnesota, 55917. Information to support the nomination is appreciated.

Questions? Call Doug Myers (507-433-6262) or Sue Zwiener (507-583-2200)

**Blooming Prairie School District
Alumni & Friends
Athletics Hall of Fame**

Lemar Nelson, in his article in this issue of Blossoms Forever, celebrated some of the many Blossom athletic accomplishments during the time that he served as teacher, coach, and administrator. We agree with Lemar and think that over our many years of existence our teams and individual athletes have brought added distinction to the honor of being a Blossom.

Consequently, we are seeking nominations of women and men who had distinctive athletic careers during their enrollment in the Blooming Prairie School District. The intent is to honor athletes who have brought distinction to the School District, to Blooming Prairie, and to themselves.

On Friday, January 25 and Saturday, January 26 the Blooming Prairie School District Alumni and Friends group will hold an Athletic Hall of Fame induction ceremony in conjunction with Alumni and Friends Distinctive Service Awards also being awarded that weekend. Readers are encouraged to submit Hall of Fame nominations via the following guidelines.

Nominees must have completed their athletic careers at Blooming Prairie High School at least 15 years prior to the date of nomination.

Nominees must have outstanding achievements in athletics at BPHS that may include:

Setting School, Conference, and State Records
Recognition at School, Conference or State levels
Unusual distinction in one sport for two seasons or
consistent distinction in several sports for more than
one season.

Accomplishments of nominees shall have been achieved in a manner that exemplifies the concept of student athlete.

Send the name, current address, telephone number, and e-mail address of nominees to Blooming Prairie School District Alumni and Friends, Box 521, Blooming Prairie, Minnesota, 55917. Information to support the nomination is appreciated.

Questions? Call Doug Myers (507-433-6262) or Sue Zwiener (507-583-2200)

AS IT WAS....ONCE UPON A TIME

Margaret Zwiener Hogan – Class of 1934

In September of 1923, there was the largest ever enrollment for Blooming Prairie's first grade, 61 were signed in. By the senior year of high school in 1934 the graduating class was 34. The less number was due to attrition. Some dropped out, some moved with their families to another town, some were rural boys who were needed for planting and harvesting, and some chose to go to another larger school with an enhanced curriculum.

Blooming Prairie High School offered a "no frills" education that served students very well in the years beyond high school. English was taught by Miss Green and Esther Sateren. Math was taught by Ted Halverson who was also the football coach. Esther Trapp taught the sciences of biology and chemistry as well as being the librarian. American and World History were offered as Social Sciences with Mr. Welsh who was also the basketball coach. Ms. Johanna Olson taught Home Economics and Ruth Woods taught Geometry.

Extra curricular activities were available. Football and basketball for the boys. The girls had only a few years of basketball. That is another story. Most athletics for girls were confined to Gym classes. Music was available in band, orchestra, and chorus. Junior and Senior plays directed by Ms. Sateren were the Arts offered.

The Class of '34' graduated on May 24th, 1934. Selmer Peterson, who went on to earn advanced degrees at a young age, was Valedictorian. Lois Melby, the Salutatorian, went on to Education, becoming the head of the Anoka District English program. Anoka is the largest District in the State of Minnesota. Carmen Halstenson became Sheriff of Mower County. Honor students were Dorothy Johnson, Gerald Peterson, Isabel Wojahn, Muriel Rasmussen, Margaret Zwiener, Ruth Bales, and Harris Peterson.

The night of Graduation, the temperature was 101 degrees. A high temp for that date that still stands today. The gym was a "SAUNA".

Note: **Margaret Zwiener Hogan, Class of 1934**, now resides at Prairie Manor Care Center in Blooming Prairie. She is a writer. According to a November 2006 news story in the Blooming Prairie Times, Margaret wrote articles for the school paper during high school and later became a professional journalist. The news story goes on to say that Margaret worked for a radio station, Austin Community College, Winona Council of

Catholic Women, and did freelance writing for newspapers. Active in the League of Women Voters, Margaret conducted many candidate forums. She married Hjelmer Hogan of Austin. Margaret is computer literate and would welcome correspondence via e-mail at mhogan@smig.net.

Growing Up in Blooming Prairie

Growing up in Blooming Prairie seemed normal to me while I was there, but after I moved away, I began to value the importance of the rich way of life that Blooming Prairie offered me. Being educated in a small school encouraged interaction with all of the students and provided important lessons useful in adult life. Tolerance was one of these lessons. Although while Blooming Prairie was largely white, there were many social distinctions, yet these never seemed to make any difference. Acceptance of different talents was another lesson learned while in Blooming Prairie. Some were athletes or musicians and others were scholars and trend setters. In Blooming Prairie, most accepted these as normal and thought little of the differences. The compassion and caring of the teachers in the Blooming Prairie schools certainly made an impression on me. The school was small enough and the faculty cared enough to lift and sustain us in our education. I often think that is why I went into teaching as my career – first in junior high school and then into college.

I moved away from Blooming Prairie after college but came back annually to visit. Coming back helped me to realize how fortunate I was to grow up in Blooming Prairie. I was surrounded by family, peers, and friends in an unthreatening environment. What more could one ask in the 1940s and 1950s. That environment is not so available in our contemporary settings.

Note: Jerry's family includes wife Erica, two sons, and two grandchildren. Jerry was recently honored by the Arkansas Geographic Alliance as Founder and 16 year President. Recognition from the President of the National Geographic Society was included in the event.

Jerry Hanson, Class of 1957

A Noble Experience Amy Noble Seitz - Class of 1986

There is nothing ordinary about being from Blooming Prairie. There is nothing ordinary about the discussion when you mention you are from Blooming Prairie. The dialogue with a stranger is usually followed by defending the Awesome Blossom, yes being proud your mascot was a black and white flower and/or making the correction that Laura Ingalls Wilder did not grow up in Blooming Prairie.



Being an Awesome Blossom yet today instills a great deal of pride; the great schools, deep family roots and a fabulous community of friends. It even makes my husband, Christopher feel a sense of pride every time we meet someone from Blooming Prairie or quite frequently when we meet "someone who knows someone" from BP. My husband grew up in the suburbs of Milwaukee and the first visit to Blooming Prairie he found it astonishing I knew hundreds of people by name and this did not include my family members. He grew up in a community where you were lucky to know the next door neighbors, let alone the entire subdivision.

In 1987 when we met in college, we would walk around the town and I would reminisce about the "hot spots," including the Pine Springs Pool and Tastee Freeze or show him my friend's or relative's homes on nearly every street. And then came the history of work experiences for me and my friends; Prairie Manor, the pool, Harriet's, the Kids Store, Super Valu, Tastee Freeze, cleaning the doctor's offices, picking weeds or picking rock. The jobs were plentiful and it wasn't a chore to work, the work actually seemed fun or was simply expected in Blooming Prairie. There was no shortage of babysitting jobs either. It seemed as if generation by generation, the children of BP raised the next generation of Blossoms. I remember the awe of being babysat by a majorette (with the fancy red suit and white boots) in the marching band or bragging to my friend that one of my sister or brother's team mates was at our house for dinner.

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A Noble Experience continued from page 5

I am grateful for my BPHS education and the opportunities which were available to us. The teachers were a dedicated group of talent making the choice to teach within a fine school district and great community when larger schools and potentially greater pay would have been available.

We had award-winning band, choir and sport's teams. I fondly remember participating in the Dorian Music Festival in Decorah, IA under the international renowned instructor Weston Noble (no relation) and taking a trip with Mr. Cliff Jones who lead the band and to Disneyworld, Florida. These events would not have been possible without a community of dedicated teachers, parents and school system.

These special events and opportunities no doubt carve a path for the future of every Blossom. Since graduating from BPHS in 1986, my parents provided me an opportunity to attend the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul after finding that the University of Minnesota was simply too big. Upon graduation in 1990, I have enjoyed positions with the Carlson Companies, the Lintex Corporation, Northwest & KLM Airlines and owning a retail business before becoming the VP for a Danish organization developing large cultural events.

From each work experience, you gain insight and valuable friendships and networks which bridge the next opportunity. For me being raised in a small town by a close loving family has enriched and fueled each work experience. I believe my entrepreneurial spirit is directly related to growing up with hard working parents who also owned their own businesses. My father Bill had a small engine & repair shop together with his career position at GTE telephone. My mother Margaret owned Margaret's Beauty Salon which eventually was modernly named the Noble Place. They insured the work ethic was instilled in each of us by the age of 15. We had our own jobs, our own sense of pride and this carried us through to today where my sister Michelle ('79), Michael ('80) and Patrick ('83) and me all owned and operated our own businesses.

As I look back on the 25 years since graduating from BPHS, I am thankful for the teachers, friends and family who insured we had experiences and a great foundation for our future success. It is the difference between action and words that makes a difference in the world. I am thankful action was taught in Blooming Prairie. The experience was nothing but ordinary.

Amy (Noble) Seitz class of '86 lives in Castle Rock, MN with her husband Christopher Seitz who is the VP of Summit Brewing Company. They have four children; Adam (17), Riley (15), Frannie (12) and Zoe (10) who attend schools in Northfield, MN. Amy owns Neat Freak, LLC which helps women start their own business and Exhibits Development Group, St. Paul, MN which develops and distributes international art and cultural exhibitions.

Lemar Nelson, Blossom Since 1957

Not being a graduate of BPHS, I was a little hesitant at first to join an organization of Blooming Prairie Alumni and Friends. But since I have been a resident of this community since 1957 and have been a Blossom all this time, I decided that this organization was one for me as well as for any graduate of the local high school.

When I came to Blooming Prairie to teach in 1957, I never ever thought that I would still be here in 2007- over 50 years later. And I certainly never thought that I would ever be an Awesome Blossom. When I was a high school athlete I was a Tiger, and when I played football and basketball in college our mascot was a Trojan, but never in a thousand years could I ever have imagined that I would wind up a Blossom.

But now that I have, I can't think of anything better to be. In those plus 50 years that I have been associated with the local high school, I have continually been impressed by the achievements of our school, athletically, academically, and in all other areas. I must admit that during some of those years, it wasn't easy being labeled a flower. In fact, I can remember at least twice in the late 60's and early 70's movements were started by various individuals or groups to change the school nickname to something other than a Blossom. The strange thing about it, however, is that none of these movements materialized. When the students themselves were given a vote, they always turned down any suggestions to change the name. As each of them commented, "Why should we change our name? If our teams are strong and play well nobody cares if we are named after a flower. And besides, there is not another school in the whole United States that has a name exactly like ours!" Enough said!

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There are so many success stories which BP alumni and friends can point to as high points and milestones in the history of the school, but a few stand out. The girls' basketball teams have compiled 8 conference champions and 2 co-championships. They have placed third in the district two different times, were district runner-up six times, sub-section champion in 1998-99 and again in 04-05 and section champion in the 1998-99 season.

No one who was involved with it will ever forget the 1966 state basketball tournament team. There was such joyful exuberance when the team fought its way through two big school teams to win the region title and then had all kinds of snow-storm drama and hardship in attempting even to get to the state tournament, say nothing about winning games. And there have been other great basketball teams as well. BPHS has four 1000-point career scorers, seven 100 career win wrestlers and one girl 1,000 point scorer. The football team in the early 60's had a streak of 22 games without a loss, and they finished a four-year period from 1961 through 1964 with a record of 29-2-1. The team made the state playoffs when that was first instituted two years in a row, losing one to northern school Esko and the second time in overtime to Bird Island in a game played at Owatonna. The BP boys won a state track title, and there have also been some remarkable individual achievements. The school even turned out a state champion in girls' golf.

The all-school musicals have been some of the finest in the area since the early 60's, the Blossom speech teams sent at least one representative to the state speech contest for twenty-five years straight and in one memorable year sent 6 competitors to the annual festival. For several years in the late 70s and early 80s the journalism class published a school paper weekly, and the Prairie Schooner annual won the All-Minnesota Award as the best small school publication two out of three years in the early 80's. The FFA judging teams were acknowledged state-wide as some of the best in the late 60's and early 70's, and the band went over 20 years with supe-

superior ratings during that period as well.

I could go on and on listing the accomplishments of our students, but that would take a whole book. Suffice it to say that although I was not born a Blossom, I am almost assured that I will die one. And that's just all right with me.

Mary Kittelson Class of 1974

I'm Mary (Dandele) Kittelson a 1974 graduate of BPHS. In 1976 I received an AA degree from Austin Community College and upon graduation began working in the Human Services field with SEMCAC a community action agency serving southeastern Minnesota. In 1987 I began a 16 year stint as the Mower County Senior Advocate helping seniors remain independent. In 2003 I accepted a position as the Community Services Director for Worlein Funeral Homes where I developed and implemented a preneed and aftercare program. In 2003 I obtained a State of MN Life Producers license and in 2004 I became at Certified Preplanning Consultant with the National Funeral Directors Association. I currently provide preneed and aftercare services for Worlein Funeral Homes in Austin and Blooming Prairie.



I live in Blooming Prairie with my husband Pete. We have one son and daughter-in-law Matt and Ranell Kittelson who also live in Blooming Prairie with their three children Anna, Drew, and Brady. Matt is a second grade teacher at Blooming Prairie Elementary. My grandchildren Anna and Drew are now the fifth generation of my family to attend Blooming Prairie schools where they are making friends and soaking up knowledge in the Pre-K program.

I am a member of St. Columbanus Catholic Church and serve on the Blooming Prairie City

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Mary Kittelson continued

Council and the Steele County CCSA Committee as well as the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation.

The Blooming Prairie Education Foundation has allowed me to become part of a group committed to enhancing the educational opportunities of the students of our district. We have a school system full of wonderful students and staff who deserve the best education possible in an environment suited to learning. My years at BPE and BPHS prepared me to continue my education, allowed me to develop lifelong friendships, and taught me many life skills not necessarily taught in books. It is my hope that with the help of the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation each and every student in our district will have those same opportunities.

B.P. Trivia continued..

Class officers in 1950 were Naven Knutson, Gordon Kruger, Janet Sauke, and Verna Jolson.

Class sizes showed steady increases between 1960 and 1980. Was the largest graduating class in 1978?

The class motto in 1992 was "Today well lived makes yesterday a dream of happiness and every tomorrow a vision of hope. Look well, therefore, to this day". Sanskrit Proverb

Among last names in the graduating class of 2000 were Johnson, Krejci, Olson, Nelson, Peterson, Srsen, Anderson, Thompson, Butler, Herdina, and Wencil.

Want to contribute to Blossom Trivia? E-mail Doug Myers at dmyers@smig.net

Want to know more about the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation? Go to blossoms.k12.mn.us

www.bloomingprairie.com contains current information about the City of Blooming Prairie

Blooming Prairie Education Foundation
PO Box 521
Blooming Prairie, MN 55917

